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Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 AF-10 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02
TRSE-00 /115 W
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R 231025Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5405
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18684

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, UN, TH
SUBJECT: WELLS/PETREE PRE-UNGA CONSULTATIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS

1. IN AUG 19 PRE-UNGA CONSULTATIONS MEETING WITH MFA'S INTER-
NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DEPT DIRECTOR GENERAL PHIRAPHONG
KASEMSI, AMBASSADOR WELLS DESCRIBED U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARDS
HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES OF UN AND SUGGESTED CONSIDERA-
TION OF ESTABLISHING UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.
PHIRAPHONG SAID IDEA OF HIGH COMMISIONER LOOKED ACCEPTABLE
IN PRINCIPLE, BUT RTG WOULD HAVE TO STUDY DETAILS OF ANY
PROPOSAL BEFORE DECISION FOR SUPPORT COULD BE MADE. PHIRA-
PHONG ALSO NOTED THAT HE WAS PLEASED U.S. RECOGNIZED LINKAGE
BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN NEEDS; RIGHTS WOULD BE EMPTY
IF NEEDS ARE NOT MET. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH RTG LEADERS
HAD NEVER TAKEN POSITION THAT HUMAN RIGHTS OF A COUNTRY'S
CITIZENS WERE PURELY AN INTERNAL MATTER , HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD
HAVE TO BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT OF THE REALITIES AND CIR-
CUMSTANCES OF EACH INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY. SECURITY, FOR
EXAMPLE, WAS IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN JUDGING HUMAN
RIGHTS SITUATION IN A COUNTRY.
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2. PHIRAPHONG SAID THAT HE FELT U.S. CONGRESSIONAL COM-
MITTEE INVESTIGATING HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN THAILAND
HAD PREJUDGED THAILAND BEFORE THE HEARINGS BEGAN. COM-
MITTEE HAD INVITED TO TESTIFY THREE OBVIOUS OPPONENTS TO
THAILAND PLUS THE STATE DEPT. ONLY AFTER ORIGINAL HEARINGS
HAD PROFESSOR SCOTT THOMSON BEEN ASKED TO TESTIFY, AND

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THE THAI, INCLUDING INTELLECTUALS AND OTHERS NOT PART OF THAI GOVERNMENT, FELT THAT THAILAND HAD DESERVED MORE IMPARTIAL TREATMENT. ALTHOUGH HEARINGS HAD NOT RECEIVED MUCH PUBLICITY IN THE U.S., THAILAND WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR EFFECTS AND THE QUALIFICATION WHICH THEY PLACED ON THAI-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP. ALL OF THIS WAS EXAMPLE OF HOW IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERED IN EFFECTIVE MULTILATERAL CHANNELS. AGAIN, HOWEVER DETAILS OF HIGH COMMISSIONER SUGGESTION AND PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING TORTURE WOULD HAVE TO BE KNOWN BEFORE RTG COULD COMMIT ITSELF.

3. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH MFA UNDERSECRETARY WONG PHONIKON, WONG VOLUNTEERED THAT WHOEVER WAS SELECTED AS HIGH COMMISSIONER WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME BEING ACCEPTED BY VARIOUS COUNTRIES BECAUSE ALL HE WOULD HAVE TO OFFER WOULD BE CRITICISM. WONG'S SECRETARY, WHO SEVERAL YEATS AGO SERVED ON COMMITTEE 111 DURING UNGA SESSION, ADDED THAT IDEA OF HIGH COMMISSIONER HAD BEEN CONSIDERED AT VARIOUS UNGAS OVER THE YEARS BUT HAD NEVER RECEIVED ADEQUATE SUPPORT, MAINLY BECAUSE SO MANY COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA, WERE SENSITIVE TO ANY SUGGESTION WHICH THEY FELT MIGHT INFRINGE ON THEIR SEVEREIGNTY. WONG NOTED THAT HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING DETAILS OF PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A HIGH COMMISSIONER, PARTICULARLY DUTIES OF THE OFFICE.
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4. COMMENT: DESPITE CAUTIOUS REACTION THAT THEY IN PRINCIPLE ACCEPT UN ROLE IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA, BOTH WONG AND PHIRAPHONG DISPLAYED OBVIOUS RESERVATIONS TO HIGH COMMISSIONER IDEA AND LEFT IMPRESSION THAT THRE WOULD BE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING AGREEMENT TO HIGH COMMISSIONER AT UNGA.
O'DONOHUE

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